

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 435 448

PS 027 989

AUTHOR Bohan-Baker, Marielle; Schilder, Diane; O'Reilly, Fran; Smith, Jennifer; Weiss, Heather

TITLE Learning from Starting Points.

INSTITUTION Harvard Family Research Project, Cambridge, MA.

SPONS AGENCY Carnegie Corp. of New York, NY.

PUB DATE 1998-00-00

NOTE 45p.; For an earlier report in this series, "Starting Points: Challenging the 'Quiet Crisis'", see ED 416 979.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.

DESCRIPTORS Child Advocacy; *Child Welfare; *Community Programs; *Learning Activities; *Learning Strategies; Program Descriptions; *Program Development; Program Evaluation; Social Services; Young Children

IDENTIFIERS Carnegie Corporation; *Family Resource and Support Programs; Family Support; *Learning Systems; Program Characteristics; Program Review

ABSTRACT

In 1994, the Carnegie Corporation released "Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children," which called for an action agenda to promote responsible parenthood, guarantee quality child care choices, ensure good health and protection, and mobilize communities to support young children and families. In 1996, the Carnegie Corporation created a Starting Points grant program to encourage states and communities to address the challenges posed by its earlier report. This report examines how Starting Points grantees have begun to develop learning systems through a variety of promising approaches. The lessons that can be drawn from Starting Points grantees' learning systems are explored. The report ends with a discussion of how these activities come together as a learning system to become a practical tool for the collection, dissemination, and use of information leading to better outcomes for young children. Three appendices contain an annotated bibliography, information on methodology, and a list of Starting Points Grantees and Strategic Partners. (Contains 17 references.) (Author/SD)

ED 435 448

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

LEARNING FROM STARTING POINTS

PS 027989

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN
MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ann B. Hannum

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LEARNING FROM STARTING POINTS



The Harvard Family Research Project

Marielle Bohan-Baker
Diane Schilder
Fran O'Reilly
Jennifer Smith
Heather Weiss

Acknowledgements

This project was supported by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York. The contents of this publication are solely the responsibility of the Harvard Family Research Project.

This report is the second in a series of reports developed under a collaborative agreement with the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) at Columbia University. The first report, *Starting Points: Challenging the "Quiet Crisis"—A Description of the Starting Points Sites*, describes the activities of the sites during the first phase of Starting Points and summarizes early lessons. The Harvard Family Research Project wishes to thank NCCP for their collaboration during this project.

The Harvard Family Research Project also wishes to acknowledge the tremendous support from the Starting Points site leadership team for this effort (See Appendix C). They have not only responded graciously to innumerable queries, phone calls, and faxes, but most importantly, they also have shared their insights on learning and development. We are also enormously indebted to our "Strategic Partners:" Chris Groark, Julia Howell, Cheryl Mitchell, Annie Sherman, and Becky Winslow. Bringing the sites' perspective, they have been true partners in shaping this report. We are also grateful to Carnegie Corporation of New York for their support of this research.

Harvard Family Research Project

Founded in 1983 by Dr. Heather Weiss, the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) is today at the center of a national movement to strengthen and support American families. HFRP's pathbreaking research provides practitioners, researchers, and policymakers with timely, insightful information about effective family support initiatives.

Disseminating its research widely, HFRP links people, programs, ideas, and resources together to create innovative family support programs and services and family-sustaining policies. HFRP's research helps states create systems to monitor and assess programs and services, and helps communities better integrate family support services in neighborhood programs. Using HFRP research and analysis, schools, agencies, and communities are learning about the best strategies for successful programming to improve child and family outcomes.

Harvard Family Research Project
38 Concord Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel: (617) 495-9108
Fax: (617) 495-8594
E-mail: hfrp_gse@harvard.edu
Web site: <http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~hfrp>

Copyright © 1998 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College (Harvard Family Research Project). All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any way without the written permission of the Harvard Family Research Project. The contents of this publication are solely the responsibility of the Harvard Family Research Project and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its funders. Printed in the United States of America.

Layout: Jessica Chapel
Printing: Graphic Communications

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	5
How Are Grantees Creating a Vision and Solving Problems Systematically As Part of a Learning System?.....	7
How Are Grantees Learning from Past Experience As Part of a Learning System?.....	11
How Are Grantees Learning from Others As Part of a Learning System?.....	15
How Are Grantees Engaging in Experimentation and Innovation As Part of a Learning System?.....	19
How Are Grantees Evaluating New Approaches As Part of a Learning System?.....	23
How Are Grantees Transferring Information and Lessons Learned As Part of a Learning System?.....	27
How Are Grantees Developing Learning Systems to Link Learning Activities in a Cycle for Continuous Improvement?.....	33
Conclusion.....	37
Endnotes.....	39
References.....	41
Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography.....	43
Appendix B: Methodology.....	45
Appendix C: Starting Points Grantees and Strategic Partners.....	47

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children, a report released by Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1994, called to action policymakers, community leaders, service providers, the private and philanthropic communities, the media, researchers, mothers, fathers, and others to address the "quiet crisis" facing this nation's youngest children. As the report describes, families facing the obstacles of poverty, inadequate prenatal care, substandard child care, and isolation require comprehensive early care and education services that can assist them in providing the start that their young children need.

In response to this "quiet crisis," Carnegie Corporation created a Starting Points grants program in 1996 to encourage states and cities to engage in practices to improve children's well-being. Grants were awarded to eight states, four cities, and two city/state partnerships to engage in activities to promote responsible parenthood, guarantee quality child care choices, ensure good health and protection, and mobilize communities to support young children and families.

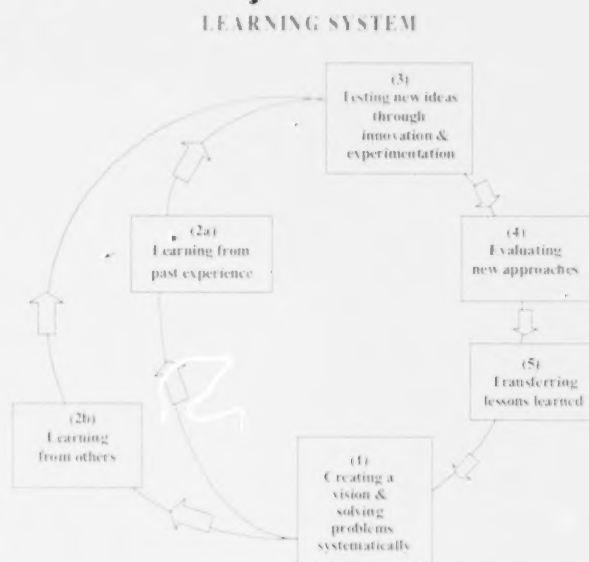
The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) is studying how states and communities are developing processes and information systems to improve and redesign their early care and education systems. HFRP is using this ongoing research to develop and test various frameworks for public sector learning and accountability systems for the 21st century. The Starting Points experience provides many state-of-the-art examples of how states and cities are beginning to develop multi-dimensional learning systems. This paper analyzes the grantees' experiences implementing key components of a learning system and presents the overall lessons for other localities intent on using information to improve outcomes.

HFRP's research shows that the initiation and expansion of learning systems occur within a broader political and cultural context and rely on four key characteristics, present to some degree for each Starting Points effort. They include:

- Leadership
- A culture that values information
- The ability to engage the political environment
- The capacity to innovate.¹

Each of the Starting Points grantees has unique goals and strategies, and each faces unique challenges. However, across the Starting Points sites, grantees are engaged in many common learning system activities (see Exhibit 1). These activities ideally work together as a learning system, leading to improvements that result in better outcomes for young children.

Exhibit 1.²



These activities include:

- Creating a vision and solving problems systematically by building consensus with multiple stakeholders
- Learning from past experiences to shape a vision for the future and to inform decision-making
- Learning from others around the nation in their efforts to improve child outcomes
- Testing new ideas through innovation and experimentation with the help of foundations
- Evaluating new approaches to changing systems, improving programs, mobilizing communities, and engaging the public
- Transferring lessons learned to stakeholders, policymakers, the media, and the public.³

The Starting Points grantees employ a variety of approaches to engage in these learning system activities.

To create a vision and solve problems systematically, Starting Points grantees:

- Ensure that key leaders who develop and advance the initiative are skilled at building consensus, resolving conflict, and developing communication mechanisms
- Create a comprehensive vision of early care and education services that guides decisions regarding funding and programs
- Develop support for a common strategic planning process that cuts across different funding streams and early childhood services
- Involve key stakeholders who ensure that goals are met
- Develop short- and long-term goals and outcome measures that can be used to assess results
- Take into account that sustainability of public sector initiatives relies, in part, on political support from overseers and demand from the public
- Assess how governance structures, resource allocation, and points of service delivery play a role in implementation and development of strategic plans that reflect this new knowledge
- Ensure that mechanisms to learn from past experience, learn from others, and evaluate new approaches are established within the strategic planning process to facilitate development of a learning system.

To learn from past experience, Starting Points grantees:

- Use results of past evaluations to identify success and failure and apply this knowledge to the Starting Points initiative
- Establish systematic processes that capture information formerly not documented
- Take into account the experience of those charged with directing the initiative.

To learn from others, Starting Points grantees:

- Integrate and transfer lessons from others into the strategic planning process as an ongoing part of the initiative
- Establish a systematic process to use information about model programs and policies around the nation on a regular basis, as well as theoretical frameworks and research, for strategic planning and decision-making
- Receive general and specific technical assistance that is balanced to meet needs
- Understand that significant tailoring to local political context is needed to adapt an outside model
- Recognize the impact of successful models as ways to generate legislative support for new initiatives
- Promote involvement from those who can help achieve the goals set out in the strategic plan and garner support for improving early care and education services.

To engage in experimentation and innovation, Starting Points grantees:

- Support and rely on leaders who can conceptualize a vision and be effective at making the smaller administrative or programmatic changes that are necessary to make progress toward that vision
- Take advantage of opportunities for innovation while maintaining a vision of where the initiative is going
- Develop incentives and forums for middle managers, staff, community members, and parents to contribute new ideas as part of ongoing strategic planning
- Develop strategies to challenge the status quo and take into account the opposition, while developing methods of overcoming it
- Capitalize on the flexibility, credibility, and fi-

nancial support of foundations in testing new approaches

- Take risks, learn from failure and reassess strategic plans.

To evaluate new approaches, Starting Points grantees:

- Develop process and outcome indicators against which to measure progress
- Employ evaluation designs as a means to achieve continuous improvement and organizational development
- Link evaluations through committees or workgroups
- Generate companion pieces to evaluations that briefly summarize main conclusions of reports
- Systematically feed lessons learned from evaluations back into strategic planning.

To transfer information and lessons learned throughout their initiatives, Starting Points grantees:

- Transfer information and lessons learned as part of strategic planning
- Establish reporting mechanisms that facilitate the movement of information between layers of the initiative

- Utilize information that audiences can relate to and that cuts across multiple issues
- Cultivate relationships with the media and a reputation as a reliable source of information
- Educate the public and policymakers in order to create a political climate where early care and education initiatives are a priority in both the legislature and in political campaigns
- Build on the momentum of national campaigns to engage the public.

In developing a learning system by linking together activities in a cycle, Starting Points grantees:

- Bring together a broad group of stakeholders to create a vision informed by past experience, as well as the experience of others
- Maintain political support and develop new constituencies for an improved early care and education system
- Introduce and evaluate innovative ways of improving programs, policies, and systems
- Set direction within the context of a broad strategic plan while maintaining flexibility for the introduction of new ideas
- Transfer lessons learned from multiple stakeholders and then feed them back into strategic planning.

INTRODUCTION

In 1994, Carnegie Corporation of New York released *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*, a report that documented the "quiet crisis" facing the nation's infants and toddlers. The 1994 report highlighted a number of critical research findings:

- Alarmingly high numbers of children are born to mothers who received inadequate prenatal care.
- More than half of the children in the United States under age one have mothers in the workforce; because high-quality child care is scarce, many infants and toddlers spend more than thirty-five hours a week in substandard child care.
- Less than half of all infants and toddlers are routinely read to by their parents; in addition, many parents do not engage in other intellectually stimulating activities necessary for their child's development.
- Almost one quarter of families with children under age three live in poverty. These families often live in unsafe neighborhoods and have poor access to quality child care, health services, and family support programs.

The report notes that the early years are critical for children's brain development, and that certain policies, programs, and activities have been shown to improve children's well-being. In response to these findings, Carnegie Corporation of New York created a Starting Points grants program in 1996 to encourage states and cities to engage in practices to improve children's well-being. Grants were awarded to eight states, four cities, and two city/state partnerships to engage in activities to promote responsible parenthood, guarantee quality child care choices, ensure good health and protection, and mobilize communities to support young children and families. Grants were made to state and city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and collaborative bodies composed of business, nonprofit, and government representatives. Grantees concentrated their Starting Points efforts on a

primary approach such as systems change, program improvement, or community mobilization and public engagement.

All the grantees recognize the importance of improving policies, programs, and service delivery approaches in order to improve the well-being of young children and to meet the increasing demand for results that justify public investment in an early care and education system.⁴ They understand that to improve their "bottom line" child well-being they need to engage in innovative practices based on what is being learned in the field and in their own organizations. As parents find that access to quality health care, child care, and family services is necessary to address their young children's needs, grantees have also recognized that policies and programs in these areas need to be improved to meet the needs of families with young children.

The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) has been studying how Starting Points grantees have developed processes and information systems to improve and redesign their early care and education programs, policies, and systems. Many of the Starting Points grantees have borrowed aspects of private sector practices to improve child outcomes. They are building "learning organizations" that focus on learning from failures and successes to find new and better ways to improve outcomes for young children.⁵

Building a learning organization is not an easy task. In most cases, it takes a reinvention of how an organization develops and uses information. It takes a willingness to admit failure and to use what is learned to inform future decision-making. To accomplish these changes, many of the Starting Points grantees are developing the elements of a multi-dimensional learning system that include a variety of strategies and mechanisms for feeding information into decision-making processes, with the goal of improving child outcomes (see Exhibit 1). They

use these learning systems to make informed, collective decisions about what to do next.⁶ However, learning systems do not come about merely because people want them to; initiating and expanding learning systems in the public sector requires:

- Leadership
- A culture that values information
- The ability to engage the political environment
- The capacity to innovate.⁷

Across the Starting Points sites, grantees are engaged in many of the following learning system activities:

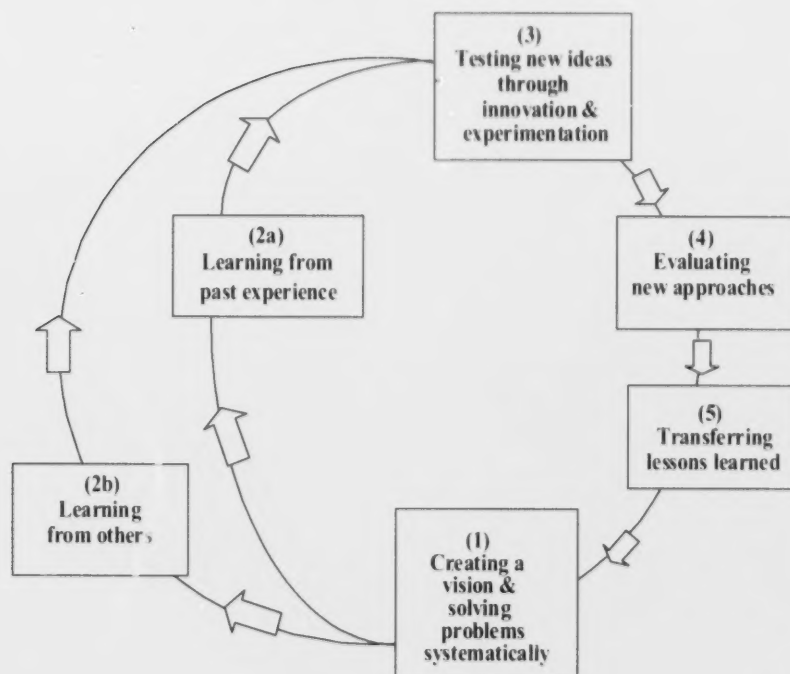
- **Creating a vision and solving problems** systematically through building consensus with multiple stakeholders
- **Learning from past experiences** to shape a vision for the future and to inform decision-making
- **Learning from others** around the nation in their efforts to improve child outcomes
- **Testing new ideas through innovation and**

- experimentation** with the help of foundations
- **Evaluating new approaches** to changing systems, improving programs, mobilizing communities, and engaging the public
- **Transferring lessons learned** to stakeholders, policymakers, the media, and the public.⁸

This report examines how Starting Points grantees have begun to develop learning systems through a variety of promising approaches. As illustrated in Exhibit 1, learning activities can be linked together to form a cycle, or system, through which information flows in order to improve initiatives and test innovative ways of improving outcomes for young children. Through discussion of the grantee learning activities and the lessons that can be drawn from these experiences, the ways in which the Starting Points grantees are beginning to develop learning systems are explored. The report ends with a discussion of how these activities come together as a learning system to become a practical tool for the collection, dissemination, and use of information leading to better outcomes for young children.

Exhibit 1.⁹

LEARNING SYSTEM



HOW ARE GRANTEES CREATING A VISION AND SOLVING PROBLEMS SYSTEMATICALLY AS PART OF A LEARNING SYSTEM?

Grantees use strategic planning to develop a vision of an early care and education system that can improve outcomes for young children. Taking a step back to answer the question "Where do we want to be?" encourages innovation and avoids a vision defined only by existing projects. Turning the vision into reality requires the development of a mission, as well as goals and objectives against which progress can be measured.¹⁰ As plans are implemented, a strategic planning process is used to identify progress, problems that have occurred, and the steps that need to be taken to achieve goals and objectives. Such a process creates a forum for exchanging new ideas and reflecting upon and incorporating what has been learned to date. When all stakeholders are included from the start, as some grantees have done as part of creating a decision-making body, the vision and subsequent strategies are more representative of key groups. This helps to facilitate "buy-in" and build support for the initiative's agenda.

There is no single or simple approach to creating a vision and solving problems systematically. The Starting Points grantees, by and large, have spent a significant amount of time on strategic planning and have demonstrated that multiple strategies and mechanisms are appropriate, given the varying contexts, cultures, and goals of the sites. However, those grantees, who have treated strategic planning as an ongoing activity and a continuously revisited process, have used it as a tool for learning. Promising approaches that grantees have taken have been to:

Ensure that key leaders chosen to develop and advance the initiative are skilled at building consensus, resolving conflict, and developing communication mechanisms.

The presence of strong leaders has been of paramount importance to grantee efforts to plan and coalesce around specific strategies. Starting Points leaders who use workgroups to manage interim

decision-making have been more effective in mitigating the difficulties that arise from working with multiple stakeholder groups than those who have not. When these workgroups, as well as the larger decision-making body, have regular meeting times and reporting mechanisms to communicate effectively with relevant and interested parties, information is shared more often and more systematically than when these devices do not exist. Leaders who have kept in mind the larger vision of what they want to accomplish have taken advantage of opportunities to be innovative, and have been willing to take risks to introduce new ideas.

Create a comprehensive vision of early care and education services that guides decisions regarding funding and programs. Some grantees have articulated a vision for their initiatives and have described how various components of their early care and education programs fit within this vision. Those that have not done so have reacted to funding guidelines from federal or state governments or foundations without a sense of how new initiatives fit with current activities. Those who have been proactive rather than reactive in developing a vision have established mechanisms that facilitate communication and coordination among various components of their early care and education systems.

Develop support for a common strategic planning process that cuts across different funding streams and early childhood services. States and cities that have separate strategic planning processes for each component of their early care and education systems have suffered from increased fragmentation and were less likely to have created a common vision than those that had such a process. In some instances, grantee states and cities have mitigated this fragmentation, as well as duplication, through the development of a broad plan encompassing the various programs and services affecting young children.

Involve key stakeholders who ensure that goals are met. Starting Points initiatives address the problem of improving child well-being from a number of different approaches; each of these approaches requires the participation of different sets of stakeholders. For example, systems change approaches have necessitated that policymakers, state agency managers, advocacy organizations, businesses, service providers, and parents be involved. Program improvement approaches have required the presence of program managers, community groups, and parents. Whatever the approach, stakeholders that are part of a learning system need to be given the authority to convert ideas into action or have access to those in authority. Stakeholders not given appropriate authority by grantees have expressed frustration and a sense that their input has led to little change.

Develop short- and long-term goals and specific outcome measures that can be used to assess results. Grantees that have integrated these mechanisms into their strategic plans have been in a stronger position to evaluate the new approaches they have developed as a result of innovation and experimentation. Those with only long-term goals have little ability to assess how activities contribute to intermediate outcomes and have not been as likely to adjust their initiatives as they have developed.

Take into account that sustainability of public sector initiatives relies, in part, on political support from overseers and demand from the public. Grantees, on the way to establishing a learning system, have developed strategic plans to reflect the political challenges that frequently come with challenging the "status quo." They have learned that part of the strategic planning process is to develop the political tactics necessary to build support and create demand for an improved early care and education system.

Assess how governance structures, resource allocation, and points of service delivery play a role in implementation, and develop strategic plans that reflect this new knowledge. City versus county control of human services systems and funding has affected where Starting Points grantees have chosen to house their initiatives. Difficulties have arisen for grantees when strategic plans have not been closely aligned with the structures that currently exist.

Ensure that mechanisms to learn from past experience, learn from others, and evaluate new approaches are established within the strategic planning process to facilitate development of a learning system. Grantees that have established these mechanisms have been able to collect information and feed it into the problem-solving process.

Building Family Connections in Georgia through Systematic Problem-Solving

The Georgia/Atlanta Starting Points initiative focuses its efforts on a state-level strategy intended to bring attention to children ages birth to three within an existing systems change initiative for all children and local efforts in three pilot communities. The initiative is coordinated by the Division of Public Health and is housed in Georgia's Family Connection initiative. The Family Connection initiative consists of community collaborative planning groups and a state-level infrastructure of facilitation and support.

Creating a vision and solving problems systematically have taken place through the Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families, a statewide strategic planning group that encompasses the state's Starting Points initiative and provides leadership for early childhood initiatives in the state. The Policy Council represents a broad array of stakeholders, including leaders representing business, government, advocacy, and policy. It also has broad geographic representation. The Policy Council meets monthly, and is made up of 21 members appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, and Speaker of the House. Several ex-officio members are commissioners of state agencies. Responsibilities of the Policy Council include defining core results for children and families in Georgia, developing and adopting a comprehensive state plan to coordinate services, and coordinating and evaluating services.

In 1994 the Policy Council adopted a 10-year strategic plan which specified the state's long-term benchmarks and translated them into specific strategies for new policy directions in the areas of accountability, service strategy, financing, systems change, and governance. The plan also specified five major areas for improvement: child health; child development; school performance; family functioning to promote a child's healthy development; and economic capacity. The Policy Council established a task force to set up a systematic and deliberate process for identifying benchmarks around the five improvement areas. The steps to this process included:

- Reviewing the literature and meeting with experts
- Setting criteria for selecting benchmarks
- Using the critical factors analysis methodology to prioritize benchmarks
- Presenting the preliminary list to communities for review, and
- Revising the list based on community contributions, data collection considerations, and the age group affected.

Serving as an umbrella organization, the Policy Council brings together the work of many separate initiatives and programs to focus on a single set of outcomes for children and families at the state and county levels. The Policy Council encompasses Georgia's Starting Points initiative, providing the infrastructure to help implement the project's two major strategies: (1) implementation of a model system of family contact, support, and service coordination, and (2) implementation of system and policy changes needed to support the system. The Policy Council recently affirmed the use of the Starting Points model as a key strategy for reaching better results for young children, and is identifying state-level policy barriers to achieving desired outcomes.

Using Strategic Planning as a Tool to Make Colorado the Best Place to Raise a Child

Colorado's Starting Points initiative, Bright Beginnings, is a public/private partnership, originally part of the Colorado Children's Campaign and now a nonprofit organization, which has the goal of improving child outcomes. The initiative combines a community mobilization approach designed to strengthen the focus on infants and toddlers with a program development approach that centers on creating a volunteer-based home-visiting program to welcome newborns into the community.

The state of Colorado used strategic planning to develop a vision for an early care and education system, and to develop strategies for reaching desired outcomes. The strategic planning process involved key business leaders, bipartisan government representatives, representatives from the faith community, nonprofit providers, health care providers, child care specialists, and a culturally and ethnically diverse membership. The strategic planning group developed a vision of "making Colorado the best place to raise a child," and articulated a goal of focusing on children from birth to age three to optimize the emotional, intellectual, and physical health of every child. A subgroup of the strategic planning group analyzed existing public and private services and identified service gaps. The subgroup then translated the vision into strategies to increase the availability of services in the areas of parent support, child care, health, and nutrition. The Colorado Bright Beginnings initiative publicly announced its goals, principles, and programs designed to achieve the overarching vision.

A statewide board is responsible for fundraising and for implementation of the Bright Beginnings goals. Local leadership councils, composed of representatives from the media, the legislature, seniors' groups, and business, health, and religious communities, focus public attention and take action to implement community solutions to children's issues. The Bright Beginnings leadership team, co-chaired by the governor, a state senator, and a business leader, has a committed presence from the business community. The leadership team is attempting to align the work of state government with Bright Beginnings goals whenever possible. For example, the chairman of the joint budget committee agreed to form a Children's Legislative Ad Hoc Committee that sets priorities and coordinates legislation affecting children between birth and eight years of age.

Business leaders have played an important role in implementing the goals of the Bright Beginnings strategic plan. Business leaders have worked to persuade Colorado employers to work with employee parents to design "child and parent friendly" workplaces and working conditions. A series of regional meetings on child care and parent friendly work issues has been held with the business community around the state. Through the Colorado Business Commission on Child Care Financing established by Governor Romer, business leaders have also worked to develop a long-term financing plan for child care that addresses the issues of teacher salaries, quality of early childhood programs, and affordability for parents.

HOW ARE GRANTEES LEARNING FROM PAST EXPERIENCE AS PART OF A LEARNING SYSTEM?

As grantees have developed a vision of where they want to be, they have looked to past initiatives for clues about what has worked and what has not. Asking the questions, "Have we succeeded in the past? Why or why not?" helps to reveal accomplishments and mistakes that can inform how new visions and initiatives should take shape. Examining evaluations, reports, and media coverage, as well as speaking to stakeholders and experts, provides information that can be incorporated into present discussions about what will make an effective initiative. Once an initiative takes hold, lessons learned through past experience help to inform the activities of the present.

As with visioning and systematic problem-solving, strategies and elements for learning from past experience vary among grantees. Among the Starting Points grantee strategies to learn from the past have been their efforts to:

Use results of past evaluations to identify success and failure and apply this knowledge to the Starting Points initiative. Some grantees have learned from what has not worked in the past and have used this knowledge to improve Starting Points. They have also integrated successful components into plans for the future.

Past evaluations have, therefore, served as valuable tools to inform current strategy and improve initiatives.

Establish systematic processes that capture information formerly not documented. Some grantees have not had access to or knowledge of past evaluations conducted as part of other initiatives. Systematic processes incorporated into strategic planning have assisted in documenting anecdotal information that is reflective of successes and failures. Such processes have helped to retain some of the institutional memory that could be lost without such documentation.

Take into account the experience of those charged with directing the initiative. Grantees have found that acclimation of new project directors and staff to past reform efforts and political context is a crucial step in strengthening new initiatives. Grantees that have devised mechanisms to ensure that staff have been educated and informed about influential factors have been in a good position to take what has occurred in the past and use it to make better informed decisions. Mechanisms such as briefings and orientations have also led to more proactive planning and implementation.

Putting Families and Children First in Ohio by Learning from Past Experience

Ohio's Starting Points initiative focuses on public engagement and community mobilization strategies to facilitate family and community involvement in state and local efforts to enhance the well-being of young children and their families. Starting Points builds on the Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF) initiative, which unites health, social service, and school systems behind the goal of ensuring that every Ohio child enters school ready to learn by the year 2000. OFCF promotes coordination and collaboration among state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, business, and families for the benefit of Ohio's children. Two governance bodies exist to carry out this function: (1) a state-level cabinet council, which coordinates state-level child and family policy; and (2) county Family and Children First Councils, which coordinate services at the local level. The Starting Points dollars are being used to involve families in the state and local-level councils.

The OFCF initiative has learned from past experience, through an earlier model systems reform effort called the Cluster, which encouraged state- and county-level changes to bring about more integrated services for multi-need youth. Through the Cluster, most counties in the state had a county-level coordinating body that focused on integrated services for this target group. The experiences from this model effort informed the OFCF of the importance of focusing on county solutions to local problems, rather than imposing state rules and "one size fits all" solutions. As a result of learning from this past experience, the state developed county-level OFCF councils to focus on prevention services for young children and families.

Senior staff at the OFCF have been strategic in developing an early care and education initiative tailored to the unique political and cultural context of the state. Rather than develop a large-scale new program (which would be politically vulnerable in this fiscally conservative state), the OFCF is designed to coordinate existing services, with the goal of improving outcomes for young children. By building on the success of the Cluster and creating a partnership between counties and the state, the OFCF develops support on the county level and responds to the state focus on local control. Further, the OFCF office responds to legislators' need for useful information by disseminating documents that translate early care and education research into language that legislators can understand and to which they can respond. As a result of tailoring the initiative to the state context, OFCF has garnered bipartisan support from the legislature.

Creating a Healthy Start for Baltimore's Young Children: Learning from Past Experience

The Baltimore Starting Points initiative focuses on a program development strategy that builds on the success of the federally funded Healthy Start demonstration initiative to ensure that all young children in two target areas of the city receive early supports and interventions. Starting Points is housed within Healthy Start, but expands services to families with children through the first three years of life.

The Baltimore Starting Points initiative evaluation builds on the existing local Healthy Start evaluation that is being carried out by The Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. Baltimore had received assistance and guidance from the National Institute for Child Health and Development, at the National Institutes for Health, in designing and implementing an evaluation of Baltimore's early childhood initiative.

Baltimore Healthy Start has two important structures in place to facilitate learning from past experience: a policy office and an office of program evaluation. The policy office makes broad policy recommendations, while the program evaluation office oversees the collection and reporting of data to be used both for external evaluation and internal decision-making. Data include changes in areas such as immunization rates, employment rates, and changes in knowledge and attitudes regarding parenting.

The policy and evaluation offices have used the data on the percent of families participating as a guiding factor in understanding "how we do our business." Early in the inception of the project, the project learned that one difficulty with reducing infant mortality rates was the very low participation rates in selected communities. Based on this knowledge, Baltimore decided to have targeted areas with very aggressive recruitment and outreach. They set an 80-90% participation rate. "The heart of the program was to get to manage and monitor that so that before we did anything else, we knew that we were penetrating the community at those rates." In order to do this, the project set monthly goals for the recruitment teams, who went door to door around two communities every day looking for pregnant woman and woman with children/infants under six months. Every two to four weeks the teams had to report on whether they were meeting their monthly objectives —"just like a sales force." Currently they have over 90% of [targeted] families participating in both communities targeted by Healthy Start. This "allows for our data to have credibility because we know we have all levels of risk."

HOW ARE GRANTEES LEARNING FROM OTHERS AS PART OF A LEARNING SYSTEM?

Grantees have been learning from others through sharing information within the Starting Points network and by bringing in national experts to assist them with their initiatives. They have sought to learn from others in order to inform their vision of where they want to be, and to find new approaches to improving outcomes for young children. By identifying and understanding the successes and failures of others, grantees have developed a broader perspective that helps them to make more informed decisions about their own initiatives.

As grantees have noted, limited resources can hamper an organization's ability to make learning from others a priority. However, they also note that Carnegie Corporation has been instrumental in providing opportunities for grantees around the nation to share what they have learned and to consult with national experts through the Starting Points network. Reaching beyond the Starting Points network to find other "best practice" examples from which to learn could be facilitated by the integration of systematic approaches to documenting the activities of other initiatives into grantees' own organizational processes. Whether adapting models from within or outside the Starting Points network, grantees have acknowledged the need to tailor these models to their own political and cultural contexts. To learn from others, Starting Points grantees:

Integrate and transfer lessons from others into the strategic planning process as an ongoing part of the initiative. Starting Points grantees that have looked to others for lessons learned as part of their regular visioning and problem-solving have done so by using conference calls and other similarly inexpensive and time-efficient means to collect information from other grantees. Grantees have made brief site visits following learning meetings held by Carnegie Corporation, and have followed up on these activities by communi-

cating what they have learned to other stakeholders within the initiative, thereby building support for adaptation of models from other states and cities. Communication with early childhood initiatives outside the Starting Points network was less apparent.

Establish a systematic process to use information about model programs and policies around the nation regularly, as well as theoretical frameworks and research, for strategic planning and decision-making. In developing a learning system, grantees have relied not only on national experts to tell them what models have been successful, but are building the capacity themselves to monitor what is going on around the nation. They have also developed a capacity to draw from others' theoretical frameworks and research in creating a vision and strategic plan for their initiatives. Benchmarking the activities of others is an example of a process that can be conducted in the future by grantees and incorporated into a strategic plan.

Receive general and specific technical assistance that is balanced to meet needs. While grantees have benefited from technical assistance provided by national experts as part of the Starting Points network, site-specific technical assistance has enhanced grantee ability to address strategic problems and challenges unique to their respective sites. However, not all grantees can afford targeted intensive technical assistance on their own. Learning from others, if accomplished through the provision of technical assistance as part of a foundation-funded initiative such as Starting Points, could be accomplished through a balanced approach of general and specific technical assistance from experts.

Understand that significant tailoring to local political and cultural context is needed to adapt an outside model. Starting Points

grantees most adept at learning from others have assessed potential funding constraints and political challenges to models that they want to use in their own state or city. In testing models developed by others, they consider resources available, public demand, and political receptivity to the model programs and policies.

Recognize the impact of successful models as a way to generate legislative support for new initiatives. Some grantees have used information from other states and cities to support their own legislative proposals. This type of activity has included the collection of information from others, as well as actual use of the information to forward a grantee's agenda. In a learning system, lessons learned from others are not only collected

systematically, but are used to inform and educate stakeholders and political leaders.

Promote involvement from those who can help achieve the goals set out in the strategic plan and garner support for improving early care and education services. Many Starting Points grantees have engaged public and private sector organizations in partnership efforts to increase the quality and quantity of services to children and their families. Others have included representatives of these groups on committees that make decisions regarding Starting Points. Another approach has been to use the credibility of external groups, such as the business community, to gain political support and increased funding for their early care and education systems.

***Exchanging City Lessons in Collaboration:
Boston, Minneapolis, and San Francisco Learn from Each Other***

Boston, Minneapolis, and San Francisco have engaged in "learning from others" in the Starting Points network. These cities have developed unique approaches to collaboration among stakeholders in developing systems change strategies that improve outcomes for young children, and have shared what they have learned with other Starting Points grantees. Learning from other grantees has meant taking lessons learned about collaboration back to their cities and tailoring solutions to their own political contexts.

Boston's Starting Points initiative, Connecting the Dots for Boston Tots, is a systems change approach that includes program development and public-engagement/community mobilization components. It combines developing citywide leadership (including the mayor's office) with program development and community mobilization in targeted communities. Both the citywide and the community-level efforts involve a strong commitment to building parent leadership. Connecting the Dots is staffed by three lead organizations: The Family Nurturing Center, Parents United for Child Care, and Health Care for All (linked to United Way's Success by Six, a five-year initiative aimed at improving the lives of young children in the greater Boston area). Through these partnerships Boston has capitalized on what others have learned from developing relationships with groups such as the business community.

The Minneapolis/Minnesota Starting Points initiative, Building Better Villages, is a combined city-state initiative that has at its core a program development and quality improvement approach to enhance services to young children in low-income communities of color, particularly Asian communities, through the Cultural Beginnings Project. In addition, the initiative is aimed at linking an early care and education agenda with an existing systems change effort in a state that had not previously targeted young children. In Minneapolis, Starting Points is part of Way to Grow, a collaborative project of the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minneapolis United Way, Minneapolis schools, local corporations, and service providers. Way to Grow established collaboratives in each of the city's planning districts that use resources to develop continuums of services for young children and their families.

San Francisco Starting Points focuses on a systems change approach through establishment of the Early Childhood Interagency Council (ECIC), which provides citywide leadership for planning, coordinating, and monitoring services for young children and families. The ECIC is responsible for creating and implementing a comprehensive strategic plan and service system for children birth to five years of age and their families, and seeks to improve outcomes for young children in San Francisco by improving programs and policies. ECIC membership includes city agency representatives, San Francisco Unified School District representatives, private foundations, parents and grandparents, direct services providers (including child care, mental health, child welfare, services for families of children with disabilities, housing, and preventive health), University of California San Francisco, and advocacy groups.

These Starting Points grantees have each faced the challenge of bringing multiple early care and education efforts in cities together to provide leadership for an integrated service system for young children and their families. Through conference calls, site visits, and consultation with one another at meetings held by Carnegie Corporation, the grantees exchanged information about city-wide collaboration between public and private sector groups with a stake in early care and education issues. They have also learned from experts within their own cities and developed partnerships with groups such as the business community that have contributed knowledge and resources to their initiatives.

HOW ARE GRANTEES ENGAGING IN EXPERIMENTATION AND INNOVATION AS PART OF A LEARNING SYSTEM?

Grantees examine gaps in how their early care and education systems are meeting the needs of young children, and view those gaps as opportunities to innovate.¹¹ As grantees innovate, they test new ideas and change the way they do business. They respond to challenges and problems identified through strategic planning with creative ways of making their visions a reality. While some focus mainly on programmatic or administrative changes, those grantees that have integrated a strong visioning and problem-solving process into their initiatives use smaller innovations as catalysts to stimulate progress toward achievement of larger systems change goals.¹² The changing political contexts in which grantees find themselves operating necessitate an ability to adapt and change on a regular basis, and this requires an organizational capacity to go beyond the one-time innovation and develop a capacity to innovate "naturally."¹³

While much has been written about the nature and challenges of innovation in the public sector, the Starting Points network of grantees represents a diverse group of initiatives that have tested these new ideas in a variety of ways. Across the network, grantees most capable of testing and learning from new ways of using resources, organizing their operations, or redefining the purpose of their initiatives,¹⁴ have found it useful to:

Support and rely on leaders who can conceptualize a vision and be effective at making the smaller administrative or programmatic changes that are necessary to make progress toward that vision. Innovative grantee leaders have consistently kept the "big picture" in mind and have made organizational adjustments to reflect lessons learned or political transitions. They have been particularly effective at networking with key stake-

holder groups and in developing strategies to gain political support for their innovations.

Take advantage of opportunities for innovation while maintaining a vision of where the initiative is going. Grantee leaders who have made innovation and experimentation part of their Starting Points initiatives have done so by preserving a balance between seizing chances to test new ideas and keeping a "broad strategic direction" for the overall initiative.¹⁵ These leaders have recognized the need to be both entrepreneurial and managerial in the implementation of their strategic plans.

Develop incentives and forums for middle managers, staff, community members, and parents to contribute new ideas as part of ongoing strategic planning. Some Starting Points grantees have been very proactive about getting the community and parent perspective on policies and programs pertaining to young children. Some have appointed representatives of these groups to participate in planning bodies and workgroups. Other grantees sent Starting Points representatives to local meetings. Middle managers and staff have also been encouraged to participate in discussions. These mechanisms have helped to broaden the decision-making process beyond upper management and have facilitated development of a learning system.

Develop strategies to challenge the status quo and take into account opposition. Some grantees, especially those engaged in systems change strategies, have had to maintain a balance between promoting innovative ideas and maintaining existing alliances with stakeholders and political leaders. Those who have been able to introduce innovations have worked carefully to build political constituencies and established credibility that enables them to periodically "challenge the prevailing wisdom."¹⁶

Capitalize on the flexibility, credibility and financial support of foundations in testing new approaches. Key stakeholders of some grantees note the importance of the flexibility, as well as the credibility, that foundation funding has given them to experiment with various systems change, program improvement, community mobilization, and public engagement tactics. Through these means, they have also been able to direct more funds to evaluation of these experiments. The combination of public and private funds that support Starting Points initiatives has been the catalyst for creating a climate where innovation is possible and additional money can be leveraged for continued sustainability.

Take risks, learn from failure, and reassess strategic plans. Innovative grantees have had a willingness to take risks by introducing new policies and programs to improve young child outcomes. Some grantees have taken political risks in their attempts to redefine how early care and education services are funded and delivered. In some cases, this has required significant strategizing to build alliances and constituencies that have influence on political officials whose support is needed for widespread implementation. Some grantees have also learned from innovations that have not been successful or those that have served as a means to achieve an intermediate goal. These grantees revisit their strategic plans regularly to make changes based on the learning that has taken place.

***Providing "Better Beginnings" for Young Children:
Innovation in Pittsburgh***

Pittsburgh's Starting Points initiative focuses on systems change strategies that grow from intensive community mobilization, and public engagement efforts. The initiative is administered by the University of Pittsburgh's Office of Child Development, a regional resource and management agency for public and private efforts regarding children and families. Starting Points works to generate evidence and support for investment in preventive services for young children.

This innovative systems change approach has required multiple strategies to develop information, strengthen programs, and to educate and mobilize policymakers, the private sector, the media, community groups, and families. Starting Points builds the support and amplification of community voices of parents of very young children, the development of public and private sector champions, and the agenda setting, consensus building, and barrier-breaking by several public-private sector partnerships. Starting Points is a catalyst, architect, source of support, and leader of these partnerships which are made up of representatives of civic, community, and business groups.

Starting Points-Pittsburgh has been innovative in how they have worked to refocus funding for early care and education toward an emphasis on prevention. As part of these efforts, they have built on existing successful models for program improvement and community mobilization and have designed mechanisms that allow them to be more responsive to the changing context of county and state government. For example, during the first phase of Starting Points, a political shift in power in county government created a need for a vehicle through which an early childhood agenda could be sustained. Responding to this need, Starting Points-Pittsburgh participated in public engagement and community mobilization activities that helped to carry the early childhood agenda successfully through this political transition and eventually gain a first-ever county government allocation to family support centers.

A willingness to take risks, challenge the status quo, and learn from experience characterize Pittsburgh's approach to innovation. Strong leadership and partnership with local and national foundations have contributed to an environment in which new ideas can be tested. As one source noted, "Foundations are a critical resource that can come in early and push an agenda forward, if that needs to happen." Once the early childhood agenda was maintained through political transition, a reevaluation and redesign of the strategic planning process was initiated to reflect "a fundamental shift from a two-year proposal to a long-term strategy for policy change" that emphasizes prevention. This learning process included reviews of the plan by critical reviewers, as well as buy-in from key funders and leaders in the area.

Furthermore, in order to gain credibility for their prevention agenda, Starting Points-Pittsburgh released economic analyses and generated models to build a case for a change in policy. In collaboration with national experts, they developed a report that examined new ways of financing early childhood services and used it as a tool to educate policymakers and the public. This innovative strategy, combined with others such as the redesigned strategic planning process, the strengthening of family support centers, and further development of existing structures, has generated momentum toward development of a preventive service system for young children and their families.

HOW ARE GRANTEES EVALUATING NEW APPROACHES AS PART OF A LEARNING SYSTEM?

Grantees have used evaluation to learn from new experiences. Through various evaluation designs, grantees have discovered what is working, what is not, and how to improve their initiatives. Some grantees have learned by reflecting on evaluation data and taking corrective actions to improve programs and policies.

The diverse strategies of the Starting Points grantees in working to improve child outcomes have resulted in equally diverse ways of integrating evaluation into planning. For some states and cities, Starting Points has been used to unite pre-existing early care and education efforts. In these cases, the evaluations of these pre-existing efforts are used to inform Starting Points initiatives. Some grantees have integrated a Starting Points evaluation into larger state- and city-level plans to assess overall early care and education goals. Still others have funded separate evaluations, whether participatory or traditional. In order to collect evaluation data and use it for continuous improvement of their initiatives, Starting Points grantees:

Develop process and outcome indicators against which to measure progress. Many Starting Points grantees have collected indicator data to monitor advancement toward initiative goals and objectives, and have fed this information back into decision-making and problem-solving on the state, city, and community levels. Other grantees have engaged in collaborative efforts with others in their states and cities to develop a comprehensive set of indicators for child well-being.

Employ evaluation designs as a means to achieve continuous improvement and organizational development. Some Starting Points grantees have had a participatory role in assisting evaluators in developing indicators and designing evaluations. Collection and reporting of evaluation data have been facilitated by the evaluator and fed to stakeholders who have decision-making authority, for the

purpose of informing future activities. Other grantees have funded large traditional evaluations conducted primarily externally by universities and research institutions. These traditional evaluations have contributed to the development of learning systems when the data generated have been reported to Starting Points leaders and stakeholders and used for continuous improvement.

Link evaluations through committees or workgroups. Some Starting Points grantees regularly bring together evaluators who work on different components of the early care and education system to share information, develop common indicators, and make joint recommendations to decision-makers. This has facilitated the development of a learning system by keeping the overall vision for early care and education in the state or city alive; the various components are consistently revisited to see how they fit into that vision. The example of joint recommendations, made by a working group of evaluators, illustrates how a practical mechanism for communication can also help to reinforce how evaluation data can be a force in decision-making.

Generate companion pieces to evaluations that briefly summarize main conclusions of reports. Although many of the grantees have evaluation components to their initiatives, few have translated the information generated from these into a form understood by multiple stakeholders and policymakers. Reports filled with jargon have often precluded the use of information by those other than the evaluators themselves.

Systematically feed lessons learned from evaluations back into strategic planning. Grantees that have used evaluation data for continuous improvement have created mechanisms, such as those described above, that effectively transfer lessons learned back into problem-solving processes. These mechanisms have reinforced use of data within a larger cycle that informs decision-making.

Evaluating New Approaches to Improving Outcomes: West Virginia's Family Resource Networks

Starting Points-West Virginia focuses on program improvement and community mobilization strategies to develop integrated planning and services for young children in Starting Points centers. These efforts are concentrated in the state's Family Resource Networks (FRNs), which serve as the primary coordinating and planning bodies for a community's service system for children and families. The Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families provides assistance to the FRNs through funding, training, technical assistance, and communication. The Cabinet is focusing on building the capacity of FRNs to assure grassroots support for their continuance beyond the current administration. Two state-level commissions under the Cabinet also exist to advise on policy implementation and program quality.

Plans for evaluating progress of the Starting Points initiative are part of the comprehensive evaluation plan for the Cabinet and Family Resource Networks. The evaluation is incorporated into the five-year Child and Family Service Plan that includes goals, objectives, and outcome measures for improving services. The Starting Points Centers within the FRNs requested technical assistance from the Cabinet in the area of program evaluation. In response, fact-finding tours of two Starting Points Centers were conducted to determine how local program evaluation could be added to the overall evaluation of all Cabinet activities. The results of the tours were utilized to plan a statewide technical assistance meeting in January 1997, focusing on evaluation.

The Cabinet has the authority to waive state rules and regulations that impede coordinated service delivery and to transfer funds within and between state agencies. This has resulted in the creation of the Family Resource Planning Fund, which supports FRNs in planning and coordinating, with a blending of federal, state, and private dollars. It has also resulted in an effort to coordinate state data beyond the current Child and Family Database to include other information such as juvenile justice data. This is done by task teams responsible for the development of common indicators of child well-being in West Virginia. The Cabinet has also worked closely with the Business Champions group and a communications workgroup to develop public awareness materials to improve consumer education, and has collaborated with key business leaders in promoting the development of childcare centers in local businesses. "The presence of business has helped to raise the consciousness of the legislature" about the need for quality childcare.

Evaluating New Approaches to Giving Every Child in North Carolina a Smart Start

North Carolina's Starting Points initiative focuses on a systems change approach to build on the state's well-regarded, locally-based initiative for young children and their families, Smart Start. Smart Start is currently a \$90 million comprehensive early childhood education and health initiative. The primary goal of this public-private initiative is to ensure that every child in North Carolina enters kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed, by improving access to quality, affordable child care, health care, and other family support services. Three components of the *Smart Start* program were authorized in legislation:

- The provision of statewide early childhood services for all children, from birth to age five, and their families
- The creation of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, charged with the development of a comprehensive, long-range strategic plan for early childhood development
- The creation of local partnerships to establish and implement programs to serve the young children and families in their communities.

Evaluating new approaches has been part of Smart Start since its inception. From the beginning, the initiative has been part of a performance-based evaluation conducted by The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. Since then, the evaluation team has developed a comprehensive plan to evaluate state and local goals and objectives of *Smart Start*. Initially, the evaluation team developed an evaluation plan for collecting a core set of data from all pioneer partnerships; provided local partnerships technical assistance regarding evaluation issues; and reported on the process of planning *Smart Start* activities. The evaluation team then produced a comprehensive set of indicators for potential use by all counties in their local evaluations, and began collecting data in the areas of child care, health, and family services. The team also identified expected outcomes for the first four goals articulated by the Partnership (those related to the children and families of North Carolina) as well as the tools to measure them. Evaluators collect this data over time to examine the impact of the *Smart Start* initiative on children and families. The evaluation team reports data to the Department of Health and Human Services and to the counties to assist them in their decision-making.

Smart Start was also subject to a performance audit conducted by Coopers & Lybrand, which resulted in changes to the structure of the initiative and a large program expansion. The performance audit examined the program's purpose, mission, and various components, and its results were reflected in legislation passed by the General Assembly. The legislation included recommendations for increased funding and required the Partnership to develop and implement comprehensive planning, reporting, and control systems.

HOW ARE GRANTEES TRANSFERRING INFORMATION AND LESSONS LEARNED AS PART OF A LEARNING SYSTEM?

Grantees develop mechanisms for transferring lessons learned in order to provide stakeholders with information that they need to make decisions and generate support for their strategies. Within organizations, transferring information is used to facilitate the day-to-day business of an initiative and the exchange of new ideas. It also helps to ensure that multiple organizations and individuals involved are on the "same page." Externally, organizations transfer information to educate and inform public officials, interest groups, the media, and citizens in order to build support and generate public will for an initiative.

While the Starting Points grantees vary in their approaches to improve the early care and education system in their state or city, communication mechanisms played a role in all grantee efforts to further their initiatives. To transfer information and lessons learned, grantees:

Transfer information and lessons learned as part of strategic planning. Grantees skilled at collecting and using information to improve their initiatives have created mechanisms that are systematically used to channel information to multiple stakeholders and decision-makers. As a result, these grantees have been able to alter their strategic plans to reflect accurately where they want the Starting Points initiative to be, based on up-to-date knowledge. This type of transfer of information creates a "common ground" upon which to make decisions and is a key component of developing a learning system.¹⁷

Establish reporting mechanisms among layers of the initiative that facilitate decision-making. For many grantees, the comprehensive nature of the Starting Points initiative has required them to find ways to facilitate communication among state administrators, providers, community groups, and parents, whether the primary initiative strategy has been systems change, program

improvement, community mobilization, or public engagement. A significant challenge noted by some grantees has been communication among these different groups. This challenge has been met in a variety of ways. While some grantees regularly send Starting Points representatives to community meetings, others have set up networks of workgroups that include representatives of all stakeholder groups that report to a state- or city-level decision-making council or committee.

Utilize information that audiences can relate to and that cuts across multiple issues. Many of the grantees have used brain development research to spark the interest of elected and appointed officials and the general public in early care and education issues. They note that the scientific nature of the brain development information, in addition to the long-term implications brain development has for development of an effective workforce, has given their proposals credibility with a broad audience. Methods for disseminating the information vary among the grantees, from a comprehensive Train the Trainers model used to roll out presentations in different parts of the state, to conferences focused on the brain development of young children. More targeted use of the information also occurred in such settings as "grand rounds" at hospitals, to educate physicians further.

Cultivate relationships with the media and foster a reputation as a reliable source of information. Some grantees have been more active than others in using the media to promote their initiatives and raise public consciousness about the importance of the early years. One reporter noted how effective one state official had been in developing media contacts by communicating proactively and personally about potential stories developing in his agency. Other grantees have been active in obtaining coverage on the issue of early care and education in local magazines and newspapers.

Educate the public and policymakers in order to create a political climate where early care and education initiatives are a priority in both the legislature and in political campaigns. To bring the issue of early care and education to the public debate, grantees have engaged in public engagement strategies to raise the awareness of the public and policymakers about the need for increased attention to early care and education issues. These strategies have helped pave the way for

legislation and increased funding for services for young children.

Build on the momentum of national campaigns to engage the public. Some grantees report that the national "I Am Your Child" campaign has provided the catalyst needed for public engagement and community mobilization activities in their states and cities. Some also note that tailoring of the campaign to local contexts has been important in reaching local audiences.

***Mobilizing Communities and Engaging the Public:
Florida's Transfer of Brain Development Research throughout the State***

Florida's Starting Points initiative focuses on public engagement and community mobilization approaches, with special components for different audiences. Their primary strategy has been to use brain development research as a tool to mobilize state and community stakeholders to improve and integrate public and private sector policies affecting young children and their families. Leadership for Starting Points is provided by three agencies: the Center for Education Enhancement and Development at Florida State University, the Florida Children's Forum, and the Florida Center for Children and Youth. Early care and education efforts in Florida overall are coordinated by the State Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Services.

Transfer of brain development research has been a central aim of the strategic planning that has taken place in Florida. The Florida Starting Points initiative has been instrumental in creating a climate of public awareness and support for the needs of children birth to three, and has created a "common ground" among decision-makers. Using a Training of Trainers model, the initiative aims to influence the beliefs and behaviors of trainers and participants, based on a greater understanding and appreciation of brain development in the early years of childhood. Through transfer of the brain research, they have created a heightened state-wide awareness of the urgency for expanding services and financial support for young children, and an environment where early care and education initiatives have enjoyed increased support during the past two years. They have moved from a defensive posture in the state legislature to a political climate in which early care and education initiatives are a priority in both the legislature and in political campaigns. Specific public engagement efforts that have facilitated the transfer of information include:

- Over 20,000 citizens have heard presentations about early brain development and implications for policy and program improvements from over 250 local "brain resources" trained by the Starting Points project.
- At least ten of Florida's twelve major newspapers have run front-page, multi-page articles about early brain development.
- *Florida Trend*, a major business magazine, ran a cover story and related articles about early brain development, and business involvement in child care initiatives.
- The Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida developed and sponsored several "Zero to Three" PSAs, which ran continuously statewide during the legislative session.
- *The Miami Herald* ran a series of editorials during the session urging the support of expanding early childhood initiatives.
- Local child advocates received training using *A Guide for Getting Media Coverage for Early Childhood Initiatives*, which was developed by the Starting Points project.
- The *Florida Kids Count Data Book* and the *1997 Profile of Florida's Children* contained a new focus on young children and their families.
- A coalition of child advocacy groups, led by the United Way of Florida, maintains an active database of over 2800 local advocates who can be reached by email or fax regarding critical early care and education issues.

***Developing a "Common Ground":
Transferring Information from the Community-Level to the
State-Level in Rhode Island***

Building on an existing school-linked Family Center model, Rhode Island's Starting Points initiative uses program development, community mobilization, and public engagement strategies to develop integrated planning and services for young children. The Rhode Island Department of Health, Department of Education, and the United Way of Southeastern New England manage the initiative. With information from the community-level to inform policy-making, this public-private management team provides leadership, oversight, and a direct link to the Children's Cabinet and the Danforth Policy Group.

Transfer of information from the community- to the state-level is critical to Rhode Island's strategic plan to develop an integrated service system for young children. Through Child Opportunity Zones (COZ) Family Centers, funded in part through Starting Points, community capacity to deliver a comprehensive set of services to young children has been built. As part of this process, community assessments have been conducted and priorities for development of an integrated service system set. Because integrated services at the community-level rely heavily on financing and infrastructure reconfiguration on the state-level, Rhode Island has made communication among community-based providers, consumers, and the state-level Children's Cabinet a high priority. This has been accomplished through multiple reporting strategies that contribute to the development of a "common ground" between policymakers, providers, and consumers of service. These strategies include public forums involving families and community service providers, and a statewide network of Family Center Coordinators, along with public engagement strategies.

The Starting Points initiative has enhanced the early childhood focus of the school-linked COZ Family Centers by providing resources and technical assistance for communities to address early childhood issues. Leaders of the Starting Points initiative have transferred lessons learned from participation in the Finance Project to the development of proposals for other foundations, and have built on national momentum created by the "I Am Your Child" campaign. The most important lesson learned has been the importance of transferring information from the community-level to the state policy level in order to influence system reform that strengthens services for young children and their families.

Creating "Stronger Communities" through Transferring the Stories of Community Members to the State-Level in Hawaii

Hawaii's Starting Points initiative for young children and their families, known as "1-2-3 Steps to a Stronger Community," is a collaborative project under the sponsorship of the Hawaii Medical Association and the Governor's Office. The initiative uses a systems change approach at the state-level to foster collaboration among departments and organizations. It also focuses on public engagement and community mobilization to increase awareness of a birth to three agenda at the community-level. 1-2-3 is implemented through the offices of Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA) and 1-2-3 Steps to a Stronger Community (1-2-3). Working with families and service providers in three target communities that have active leaders and core services in place for young children, 1-2-3 aims to create a seamless system of care that respects the cultural background of families and knits together health care, child care, and family support.

The 1-2-3 initiative uses a variety of mechanisms to transfer lessons learned. On the state-level, a coordinating council, made up of representatives of the Department of Human Services, Health, and Education, as well as various organizations, works to encourage collaboration among agencies and mobilization of stakeholders around an early childhood agenda. The initiative engages the private sector through the Hawaii Business Roundtable and partners with philanthropies such as the Hawaii Community Foundation and the Queen Liliuokalani Trust. On the community-level, 1-2-3 has improved its initiative through the use of tools such as a community survey on sources parents use to gain information about prenatal care and other issues. 1-2-3 used survey data to adjust communication strategies to target messages to community contexts more effectively.

To encourage learning from experience, Hawaii uses a unique strategy called "talk story," which is tailored to the specific cultural context of the state. Talk story is a process by which individuals share in their own language their perspectives on critical issues. Hearing the community perspective provided through talk story enables policymakers and service providers to tailor strategies and services to individual communities. In one example, the state has developed community-level public engagement efforts targeting information in a community responsive way by posting public engagement messages in locations such as local laundromats, where families naturally congregate. In addition, 1-2-3 uses data to understand how the initiative is progressing in areas such as community support for an early childhood agenda, community capacity for integrating services to children, and the status of infant and toddler care and health. The knowledge of how the initiative is progressing provides ongoing information to inform plans and strategies most effectively in the three target communities.

Carnegie Corporation of New York Facilitates Learning in a Network through Transfer of Information

Carnegie Corporation developed and facilitated opportunities for Starting Points grantees to learn as a network of early care and education initiatives. With the release of the report, *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*, Carnegie transferred lessons learned from early care and education research and called to action policymakers, program administrators, researchers, the media, families, and the general public to address the "quiet crisis" facing young children. After providing grants to states and cities to meet the challenges described in the report, Carnegie brought together the grantees to learn from national experts and to engage in peer-to-peer problem-solving and networking. These opportunities have provided a forum for the exchange and transfer of ideas in the areas of learning and development, public engagement, and financing of early care and education services. Specifically, grantees have noted the value of the following activities:

- The Learning from Starting Points Institute held in Pittsburgh provided a chance for grantees to hear from national experts and other grantees about such topics as building learning and development networks, developing and using information, and using communication strategies to influence policy. Opportunities to engage in peer-to-peer networking and problem-solving through "Team Challenges" were also a vehicle for grantees to learn from others with similar goals.
- The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) and National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) learning and development activities have provided grantees with opportunities to describe strategies, activities, and outcomes, and to learn from one another. *The Starting Points: Challenging the Quiet Crisis* provided descriptive information for sites to learn about the activities of others in the network. In addition, grantees had the opportunity to share lessons learned through conference calls facilitated by the HFRP/NCCP Team.
- The "I Am Your Child" public engagement campaign created national momentum for the use of brain development research to promote an early care and education agenda in states and cities. Some grantees, with assistance from the Families and Work Institute, tailored the campaign to their own political and cultural contexts, which has helped to leverage additional funding and to develop various vehicles for transferring the research to the public, such as conferences and a Train the Trainers model.
- The Finance Project's Learning Cluster has served as a means to transfer important information to grantees about the financing of early care and education services. Grantees note that they learned both from national experts and from one another about new ways to finance early care education service systems.

Carnegie Corporation, through these activities, has created a network "that has enabled [grantees] to gain greater capacity and build on the strengths of their own site and the other sites" to meet the needs of young children better. With these efforts, Carnegie has contributed to the development of a learning system among the grantees and within the broader Starting Points network, as well as given grantees an opportunity to engage in innovative ways of changing systems, improving programs, and mobilizing communities and the public.

HOW ARE GRANTEES DEVELOPING LEARNING SYSTEMS TO LINK LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN A CYCLE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT?

The complex and multi-dimensional nature of a learning system requires initiatives to link a series of activities designed to capture information, disseminate lessons learned, and apply new knowledge when making decisions and solving problems. Whether focused on systems change, program improvement, community mobilization, or public engagement, grantees need to learn from success and failure and use this information for continuous improvement in the pursuit of better outcomes for young children. The Starting Points grantees have demonstrated their ability to engage in these types of activities to varying degrees. In developing a learning system by linking these elements and activities to a larger cycle, Starting Points grantees:

- Bring together a broad group of stakeholders to create a vision informed by past experience, as well as the experience of others
- Maintain political support and develop new constituencies for an improved early care and education system
- Introduce and evaluate innovative ways of improving programs, policies, and systems
- Set direction within the context of a broad strategic plan while maintaining flexibility for the introduction of new ideas
- Transfer lessons learned from multiple stakeholders and then feed them back into strategic planning.

In a learning system, program improvement, community mobilization, and public engagement activities are not implemented as isolated events, but as part of larger systems change efforts aimed at creating a climate in which initiatives can be sustained and potentially scaled up to reach greater numbers of young children.

Vermont's Learning System

Vermont Starting Points has established processes for learning and transferring lessons learned to key stakeholders in the state to improve outcomes for young children. One key aspect of Vermont's learning system is the Vermont Early Childhood Steering Committee, which includes many key stakeholders in the state responsible for conceptualizing, implementing, and evaluating early childhood services. This group is responsible for developing a state system of early care and education. To achieve this mission, the Committee has established processes for visioning and problem-solving; learning from past experience and the experience of others; testing new ideas through innovation and experimentation; evaluating those new approaches; and transferring lessons learned.

Creating a Vision and Solving Problems Systematically

The Committee has established problem-solving activities that begin with articulating a vision of where the state wants to be in terms of early childhood outcomes. The Committee has established a strategic planning process in which this vision has driven the articulation of goals and strategies for achieving the outcomes. In addition, the Committee examines barriers that prevent the state from achieving its goals and develops strategies to overcome them. The problem-solving activities rely on lessons learned from past experiences in Vermont, lessons from others, and data about the success or failure of experiments. This information is used to revisit the vision and the planning process as new lessons are learned.

Learning from Past Experience

In developing a vision for Starting Points, Vermont built on existing community and state alliances already in place and viewed the initiative as a vehicle for continuing implementation of the Governor's Campaign for Children. By incorporating information from past reports written by the Departments of Health, Employment and Training, as well as Commerce, they were able to compile data into community profiles that are continually updated and serve to inform the visioning and problem-solving efforts of Starting Points and other human service initiatives.

Learning from Others

The Committee regularly invites outside consultants and experts within and outside the state to share knowledge and insights with the group. In addition, members of the Committee share lessons learned from articles, reports, and state and national meetings and conferences. The Committee promotes innovation and experimentation in a variety of ways. It

oversees the Vermont Success by Six initiative, which grants localities regulatory flexibility in exchange for a focus on improved results. For example, localities are experimenting with a variety of innovative approaches to welcoming babies, ranging from recruiting volunteers for home visit programs, to enlisting public health nurses to meet with new mothers, to sending information to new parents. The Committee plans to evaluate Success by Six using a methodology that will capture the lessons learned by the different localities in attempting unique and innovative approaches to improving outcomes for young children.

Testing New Ideas through Innovation and Experimentation

The Committee promotes innovation and experimentation in a variety of ways. It oversees the Vermont Success by Six initiative, which grants localities regulatory flexibility in exchange for a focus on improved results. For example, localities are experimenting with a variety of innovative approaches to welcoming babies, ranging from recruiting volunteers for home visit programs, to enlisting public health nurses to meet with new mothers, to sending information to new parents. The Committee plans to evaluate Success by Six using a methodology that will capture the lessons learned by the different localities in attempting unique and innovative approaches to improving outcomes for young children.

Evaluating New Approaches

The Committee has established processes to collect, report, and use indicator and evaluation data to learn from their own experiences. The Committee is focused on the goal of improving school readiness for all children in the state and is measuring progress toward this goal by monitoring an interim indicator of progress — improving the quality of child care. To achieve progress on this indicator, the Committee has developed strategies to increase the quality of centers in the state by developing the Core Standards for Center-Based Early Childhood Programs. The Committee systematically uses indicator data and evaluation data to assess progress, understand why changes have occurred, and alter strategies based on lessons learned.

Transferring Lessons Learned

The Committee has established processes for transferring lessons learned, and the very nature of the Committee leads to transferring of learning. The Committee consists of providers, parents, policymakers, and evaluators and meets on a regular basis to problem-solve and share lessons learned. The Committee reports to a state Team on Children and Families that oversees the integration of social and educational services in the state. The Committee also promotes sharing of lessons with localities, through sharing materials in printed format, conducting site visits to localities, and promoting peer technical assistance.

CONCLUSION

Learning systems encompass processes that can be used to improve initiatives continuously to achieve better outcomes for young children. A learning system is not merely a model to be imposed on organizations, but a set of tools and strategies that facilitates the use of information in decision-making that can be tailored to the characteristics of a specific initiative. It also provides a means to link the activities discussed in this report. Each of the Starting Points grantees faces challenges to initiating and expanding learning systems: identifying effective leaders; creating a culture that values information; engaging the political environment; and developing the capacity to innovate. Grantees that have recognized these challenges and have displayed promising approaches to learning and development are producing initiatives that lead to better outcomes for young children.

Through their learning and development activities outlined in this report, the Starting Points grantees provide lessons learned for future Starting Points activities, as well as the larger field of early care and education. These lessons include the following:

- Strong, visionary leaders willing to use information and take risks, greatly influence the success of initiatives in developing learning systems and engaging in innovation and experimentation.
- Building consensus with multiple stakeholders takes time, money, skilled leaders, and a willingness to tailor initiatives to the political climate.
- The size and scope of an initiative will determine the complexity of strategic plans, the involvement of certain stakeholders, and the amount of information that will be fed through a learning system. Breadth and depth of strategic plans should reflect current initiatives, in contrast to using a one-size-fits-all strategic planning approach.
- Governance structures (e.g., county versus city control of human services) must be taken into account when a vision is created and strategic plans are developed.
- Foundations can play a critical role in encouraging grantees to explain the link between their strategies and the outcomes they wish to produce.
- Applicability of model programs or policies must be carefully analyzed. The political and financial support that varies from state to state and city to city requires that subsequent tailoring of models to those new contexts must take place if they are to be adapted successfully.
- Foundations must recognize that initiatives need to be tailored appropriately to the local political and cultural context. Foundations are also instrumental in bringing together public sector initiatives around the nation to share information and learn from one another.
- Educated leaders and stakeholders who are familiar with past initiatives are better able to use successes and failures as lessons learned for future initiatives than those who are not.
- National experts provide needed information about what states and cities are doing around the nation, but are not a replacement for mechanisms within organizations that promote routine monitoring and use of information from other sources.
- Partnerships such as those with the private sector can lend expertise and credibility to public sector organization initiatives, and can contribute to an environment that stimulates innovation and experimentation.
- Participation in the creation and implementation of evaluations helps organizations use data for continuous improvement. Indicator development

is an integral part of this process in order to develop measures against which to measure progress and draw out lessons learned.

- Mechanisms and incentives for participants in the initiative to contribute new ideas and take risks should be established to capitalize on the knowledge and expertise of stakeholders and staff.
- Transfer of information occurs internally and externally to the initiative and requires strategies to address different audiences. A common language among stakeholders brings together communities and professions with different expertise to articulate a common vision and solve problems.

- Knowledge about how to develop relationships with the media, in addition to strategies for influencing the political system, is necessary to generate broader support for an initiative.
- Use of information that provides a "hook" and gets the attention of policymakers, the media, and the public contributes to making an issue part of the public debate and building the political will for greater focus on a particular issue.
- Viewing learning as a systemic process helps to link learning activities formerly isolated from one another and provides a tool with which to identify gaps in information generation and use.

ENDNOTES

¹ Weiss, H. B. & Morrill, W. A. Manuscript in preparation. *Useful learning for public action*. Washington, DC: Council for Excellence in Government. Also, Moore, M. H. (1995). *Creating public value: Strategic management in government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

² Adapted from Weiss, H. B. & Morrill, W. A. Manuscript in preparation.

³ Garvin, D. A. (1993). Building a learning organization. *Harvard Business Review* 71 (4), 78-91. Garvin defines a "learning organization" as one that is "skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights." See annotated bibliography for other key resources on organizational learning such as Argyris & Schon (1996) and Senge (1990).

⁴ Schilder, D. (1998). *Aiming for accountability: Lessons learned from eight states*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

⁵ Garvin, D. A. (1993).

⁶ Weiss, H. B. & Morrill, W. A. Manuscript in preparation.

⁷ Weiss, H. B. & Morrill, W. A. Manuscript in preparation. Also, Moore, M. H. (1995).

⁸ Garvin, D. A. (1993).

⁹ Adapted from Weiss, H. B. & Morrill, W. A. Manuscript in preparation.

¹⁰ Moore, M. H. (1995).

¹¹ Moore, M. H. (1995).

¹² Moore, M. H. (1995).

¹³ Light, P. C. (1998). *Sustaining innovation: Creating nonprofit and government organizations that innovate naturally*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

¹⁴ Moore, M. H. (1995). Moore distinguishes among different types of innovation: (1) policy or program innovations that define new ways of using an organization's resources to accomplish an overall mission; (2) administrative innovations that involve new methods for accounting for, or controlling, the organization's operations; and (3) strategic innovations that are stirred by other innovations and may move the organization to new purposes, methods, and, potentially, a future capacity to learn and innovate.

¹⁵ Moore, M. H. (1995).

¹⁶ Light, P. C. (1998). Light discusses the four factors that influence an organization's ability to test new ideas: (1) its external environment; (2) its internal structure; (3) its leadership; and (4) its internal management systems.

¹⁷ Weiss, H. B. & Morrill, W. A. Manuscript in preparation.

REFERENCES

- Argyris, C. & Schon, D. A. (1996). *Organizational learning II: Theory, method, and practice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Carnegie Corporation of New York. (1994). *Starting Points: Meeting the needs of our youngest children*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Duncan, R. & Weiss, A. (1979). Organizational learning: Implications for organizational design. *Research in Organizational Behavior* 1, 75-123.
- Edmondson, A. C. & Moingeon, B. (1997). *From organizational learning to the learning organization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School.
- Fiol, M. C. & Lyles, M. A. (1985). Organizational learning. *Academy of Management Review* 10 (4), S03-S13.
- Garvin, D. A. (1993). Building a learning organization. *Harvard Business Review* 71 (4), 78-91.
- Jenlink, P. M. (1994). Using evaluation to understand the learning architecture of an organization. *Evaluation and Program Planning* 17 (3), 315-325.
- Light, P. C. (1998). *Sustaining innovation: Creating nonprofit and government organizations that innovate naturally*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Moore, M. H. (1995). *Creating public value: Strategic management in government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- National Center for Children in Poverty & Harvard Family Research Project. (1997). *Starting Points: Challenging the "quiet crisis"—A description of the Starting Points sites*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University School of Public Health.
- Parsons, B. A. (1997). *Using a systems-change approach to building communities*. Colorado Springs, CO: InSites.
- Piontek, M. E. (1997). *Learning organizations and evaluation: Implications for the public sector*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Stata, R. (1989). Organizational learning — The key to management innovation. *Sloan Management Review* 30 (3), 63-74.
- Torres, R. T. (1994). Linking individual and organizational learning: The internalization and externalization of evaluation. *Evaluation and Program Planning* 17 (3), 327-337.
- Weiss, H. B. & Lopez, M. E. Manuscript in preparation. *Foundation grantmaking for children and youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.
- Weiss, H. B. & Morrill, W. A. Manuscript in preparation. *Useful learning for public action*. Washington, DC: Council for Excellence in Government.

APPENDIX A: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Argyris, C. & Schon, D. A. (1996). *Organizational learning II: Theory, method, and practice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

This important book describes the ideas and concepts behind learning organization theory. Argyris and Schon address four principle questions that they describe as cutting across the different branches of organizational learning: (1) Why is an organization a learning venue? (2) Are real-world organizations capable of learning? (3) What kinds of learning are desirable? (4) How can organizations develop their capability for desirable kinds of learning? The book provides an important theoretical foundation of organizational learning.

Fiol, M. C. & Lyles, M. A. (1985) *Organizational learning. Academy of Management Review* 10 (4), 803-813.

This article offers a review of the organizational learning literature and seeks to clarify the distinction between organizational learning and organizational adaptation. The article presents prior research, and introduces new concepts of learning. The authors define organizational learning as "the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding." Four factors that affect the probability that learning will occur include: organizational culture; organizational strategy; organizational structure; and internal and external environments. Fiol and Lyles emphasize the importance of analyzing whether organizational decisions demonstrate unreflective action-taking (adaptation) or in-depth understanding of past actions (learning) and introduce concepts that distinguish between these two types of action.

Garvin, D. A. (1993). Building a learning organization. *Harvard Business Review* 71 (4), 78-91.

This article presents the basic tenets of the idea of organizational learning. Garvin defines a "learning organization" as one which "is skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights." Through the use of examples from the private sector, Garvin discusses the building blocks to a successful learning organization: systematic problem solving; experimentation with new approaches; learning from the organization's experiences and history; learning from the experiences and best practices of others; and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization. Garvin concludes by pointing out that organizational learning generally progresses through three overlapping stages: cognitive; behavioral; and performance improvement.

Light, P. C. (1998). *Sustaining innovation: Creating nonprofit and government organizations that innovate naturally*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

This book is based on research of twenty-six nonprofit and government organizations in a variety of fields. Through his research, Light discovered four broad characteristics of innovating organizations: "a commitment to controlling their environments; an internal structure that creates the freedom to imagine; leadership that prepares the organization to innovate; and management systems that serve the mission of the organization." Light compares innovation in the private sector with public sector innovation.

Moore, M. H. (1995). *Creating public value: Strategic management in government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

This book presents a philosophy of public management and provides frameworks that managers can use to diagnose and take action to improve their own managerial skills and their organizations in the context of the complicated political environments in which they operate. Moore focuses on two main questions: "How should managers cope with inconsistent, fickle political mandates?" and "How can they best experiment, innovate, and reposition public organizations in their changing environments?" He bases his analysis in a comprehensive review of literature from fields such as political science, public administration, economics, organizational theory, private sector management, and administrative law. In addition, use of the frameworks introduced in the book are illustrated through the presentation of case examples from a variety of public sector settings.

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

The central message of this book is that organizations work the way they work, ultimately, because of how we think and how we interact. Senge asserts that only by changing how we think can we change deeply embedded policies and practices. Further, he states that only by changing how we interact can shared visions, shared understandings, and new capacities for coordinated action be established. This book describes the important distinction between dialogue and discussion and states that for learning to occur, dialogue is critical.

Stata, R. (1989). Organizational learning: The key to management innovation. *Sloan Management Review* 30 (3), 63-74.

This article is written by the Chairman of the Board and President of Analog Devices, Inc. He describes his organization's experiences with learning and makes a case for processes that need to be in place for organizations to move beyond individual learning and to become learning organizations. He describes five tools and methods that can facilitate learning and consensus-building: (1) Systems thinking; (2) Planning;

(3) Quality Improvement; (4) Organizational behavior; and (5) Information systems. He describes each tool in detail and lays out how these can be used to bring about organizational improvement.

Weiss, H. B. & Lopez M. E. Manuscript in preparation. *Foundation grantmaking for children and youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

This report is based on research conducted by the Harvard Family Research Project on major foundations with grantmaking in the infant, child, and youth areas. The report examines each foundation's grantmaking priorities and strategies and the lessons they have learned from grantmaking to organizations focused on children and families. It also looks at how changing political climates, demands for accountability, and shifts in responsibility for social programs in an age of devolution are affecting these foundation strategies. A series of findings is presented on who is being funded and how, approaches and methods supported by foundations, and the internal processes foundations use to make decisions about grantmaking.

Weiss, H.B. & Morrill, W.A. Manuscript in preparation. *Useful learning for public action*. Washington, DC: Council for Excellence in Government.

This paper examines the deficiencies, challenges, and achievements in the development and use of knowledge in public decision-making. As demand for accountability through events such as the passage of the federal Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) have created a new focus on strategic planning, objectives, performance measures, and evaluation, this paper seeks to find new approaches to using information to meet this demand and improve public action. Beginning with a review of past practices of how evaluation and research has been used in the context of organizations, the authors present two models that illustrate what they believe a learning and accountability system would look like. These models represent both the cyclical nature of learning processes, as well as the critical communities to involve in a learning system. The authors also present brief examples to illustrate how the models would work and recommend areas for demonstration.

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

Data in this report were collected from Starting Points grantees by the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP). Data were collected from January 1997, through April 1998. The Starting Points grantees are Baltimore, Boston, Colorado, Florida, Georgia Atlanta, Hawaii, Minnesota Minneapolis, North Carolina, Ohio, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Vermont, and West Virginia.

Qualitative data collection methods were used to conduct this research study. HFRP staff began by reviewing the literature on learning theory and interviewing selected national experts such as David Garvin at the Harvard Business Review. The review of the literature led to an analytic framework that focused our research questions. Although this framework became the basis for subsequent evaluation activities, it was refined throughout the project as data were collected and reviewed.

HFRP used the analytic framework to develop standard protocols to use for document reviews, interviews, and site visit observations. Using the standard protocol, HFRP staff reviewed grantee documents of selected learning and development information. This information was used to guide interviews with each of the Starting Points directors. Starting Points sites with multiple learning and development activities were sent the information, which was reviewed during the interview. These interviews resulted in brief written profiles of each Starting Points grantee's learning and development activities. These profiles informed the original analytic framework, which was further refined. Based on these refinements, protocols for interviews with additional key informants were developed. Interview protocols were developed to minimize jargon and capture the voices and experiences of those involved directly in Starting Points.

To select key informants, HFRP staff asked Starting Points directors for a list of individuals who could address questions about various learning and

development activities. We asked directors to include those who were both directly involved in Starting Points, as well as people who were charged with early childhood, financing, and other policies and programs that affect the Starting Points initiative. HFRP staff then selected from this list a sample of informants representing the following categories: legislators, personnel from governors' offices, state and local service providers, finance experts, evaluators, advocates, researchers, and media contacts. Telephone interviews were conducted with approximately 40 informants in order to learn about the challenges facing public and non-profit agencies in engaging in learning and development activities. During these interviews, informants were asked about the types of information that are generated and used to inform policy and practice. The interviews also focused on how individuals define "learning" as well as what types of learning experiences result in quality improvements. Interviews were summarized and coded (see below for description of coding).

HFRP staff then selected two grantees for site visits and conducted brief site visits to interview key informants and observe meetings. During each site visit, HFRP interviewed approximately 12 individuals representing a variety of affiliations to obtain a comprehensive and varied view of grantees' learning and development activities. In total, over 60 individuals were interviewed during the course of the entire study.

Given the variety of learning and development activities as well as the multiple entities and actors, HFRP revised its analytic framework as data were collected and analyzed. This framework enabled HFRP to code interview data according to the following categories: vision and problem-solving (for example, strategic planning); learning from past evaluations (for example, looking to previous research to formulate new strategies); learning from others (for example, receiving technical assis-

tance); innovative strategies (for example, developing a model system to provide immunizations to young children); learning from evaluation (for example, using participatory evaluation to change strategic direction); and transferring lessons (for example, publicizing outcomes and evaluation results). Interviews were also coded by type of individual affiliation and state. This multiple coding enabled HFRP staff to compile comprehensive descriptions of activities based on a variety of perspectives. This framework also enabled staff to examine a variety of learning

and development themes (for example, the role of leaders in each aspect of learning and development). A qualitative software package, NUD*IST, facilitated analysis of the data. As data were analyzed, the framework was further refined to reflect the experiences of Starting Points grantees. We recognize that learning and development activities are being refined and therefore the analytic framework used for this study will continue to evolve in response to the experiences of those at the state, city, and county levels.

APPENDIX C: STARTING POINTS GRANTEES AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The Harvard Family Research Project wishes to thank the Starting Points grantees and the Starting Points Strategic Partners for their time, insight, and guidance during the production of this report.

Barbara Squires	Baltimore
Sharon Shay	Boston
Sharon Hartman	Colorado
Dorothy Routh	Florida
Judy Bodner	Georgia
Becky Winslow*	Georgia
Donna Ching	Hawaii
Elizabeth Chun	Hawaii
Annie Sherman*	Minnesota
David Walker	North Carolina
Linda McCart	Ohio
Christina Groark*	Pittsburgh
Robert Nelkin	Pittsburgh
Mia Patriarcha	Rhode Island
Lisa Mihaly	San Francisco
Cheryl Mitchell*	Vermont
Julia Howell*	West Virginia
Kim Veraas	West Virginia

*Starting Points Strategic Partner

HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

38 Concord Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02138

Tel: (617) 495-9108 Fax: (610) 495-8594

<http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~hfrp>

45